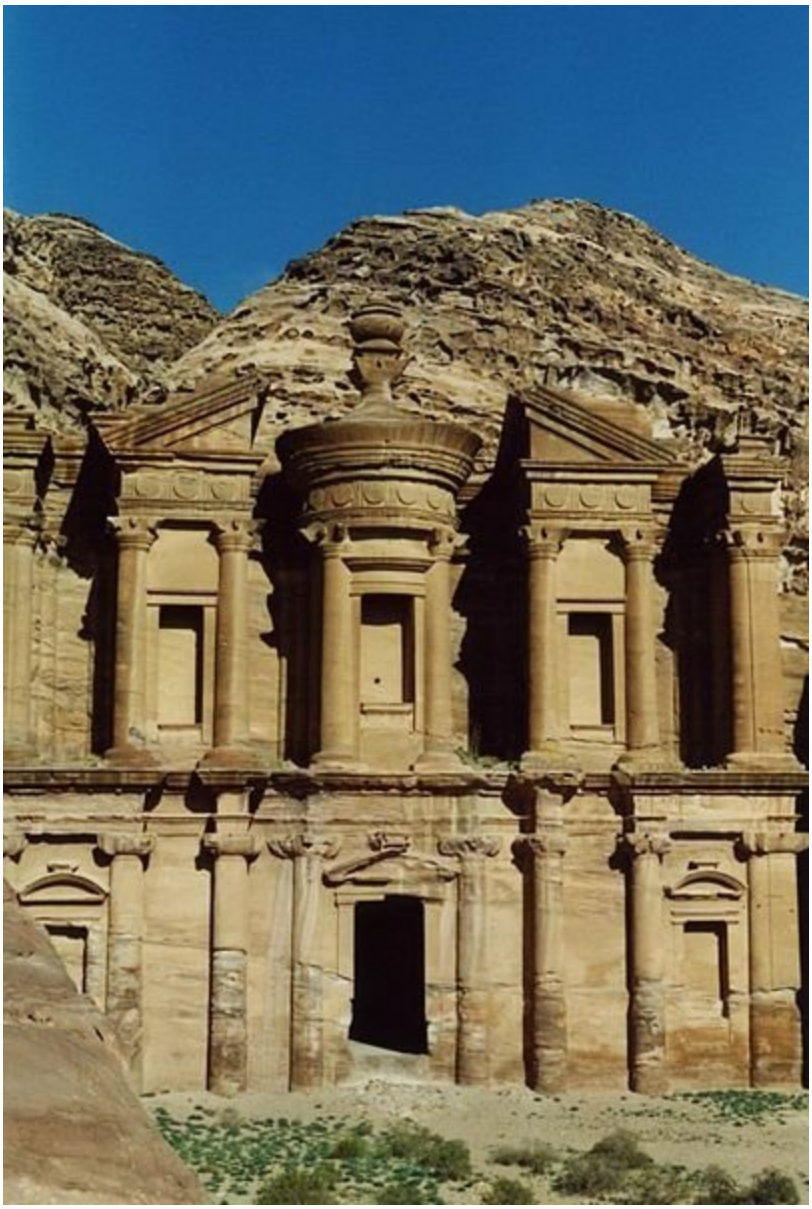
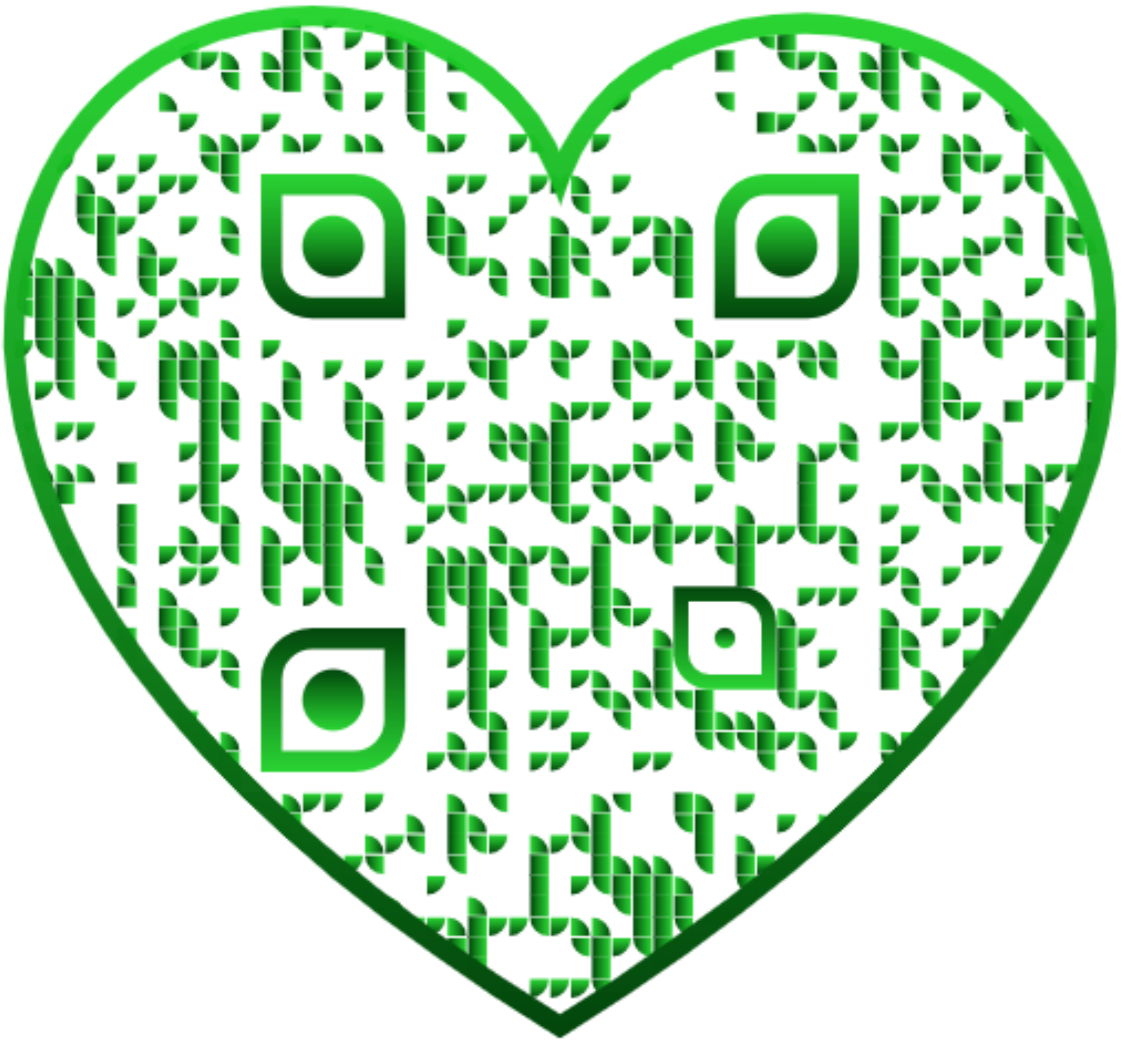
Petra: The History of the Rose City, One of the New Seven Wonders of the World

By Charles River Editors



“The Monastery” at Petra



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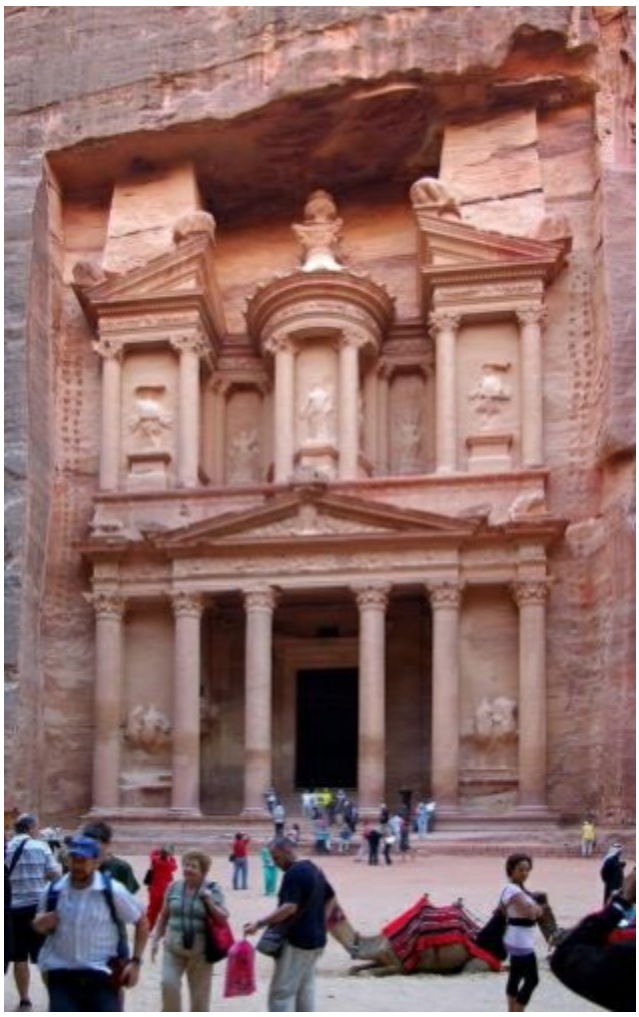
Introduction



“The Treasury” at Petra

Petra

“Petra, O Leeds, is the most wonderful place in the world, not for the sake of its ruins, which are quite a secondary affair, but for the colour of its rocks, all red and black and gray with streaks of green and blue, in little wriggly lines…and for the shape of its cliffs and crags and pinnacles, and for the wonderful gorge it has, always running deep in spring-water, full of oleanders, and ivy and ferns, and only just wide enough for a camel at a time, and a couple of miles long. But I have read hosts of the most beautifully written accounts of it, and they give one no idea of it at all…so you will

never know what Petra is like, unless you come out here… Only be assured that till you have seen it you have not had the glimmering of an idea how beautiful a place can be." - A letter from T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") to his childhood friend E.T. Leeds in February, 1914.

When the European armies of the Third Crusade were defeated at the Battle of Hattin in 1187 CE, the region of what is today southern Jordan was overrun by Saladin's armies, and over the following five centuries knowledge of Petra's existence was lost to the people of Europe. The ancient city and center of civilization hidden in the desert became a myth, drawn largely upon Biblical accounts of the people and places in the Holy Land. However, during the Enlightenment of the early 18 th century, interesting new theories emerged, and there grew a desire to rediscover the rose-red city.

It was within this context that the Swiss-born explorer and orientalist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt became the known as the first European to "discover" Petra. Disguised as an Arab, he convinced a local guide to navigate him through the innumerable dangers of the *Wadi Araba* desert in pursuit of the rumored tomb of Aaron and a timeless city hidden in the hills. On Saturday, August 22 nd , 1812, he ascended the high hills of southern Jordan and was led down a deep ravine, which twisted and turned through until a splendid sight was revealed before him: a secret valley filled with ruins and the dark holes of rock-cut tombs.

Although his disguise had brought him that far, it also prevented him from being able to fully study the ruins or make copies of what he saw there. After spending only a day exploring the valley, his guide had grown suspicious, so he was forced to move on across the Sinai Peninsula, eventually arriving at Cairo on September 4 th . [1] This expedition marked the beginnings of everything that is known about this ancient and mysterious site.

Further expeditions and archaeological investigations over the following two centuries have considerably broadened knowledge about Petra's past, and the ruined Rose City is now an archaeological landscape that has been made famous as a UNESCO World Heritage site, a "new" wonder of the world, and as the repository of the Holy Grail in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* . Yet, despite its fame, many people do not know about the religious beliefs, artistic creativity, technological innovation, commerce, and politics of

the numerous peoples that resided there.

Petra: The History of the Rose City, One of the New Seven Wonders of the World looks at the history of Petra from prehistoric times to the end of the Crusades, as well as the city's "rediscovery" in the 19 th century and how it ha entered the world's imagination since then. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about Petra like never before.

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Chapter 1: The Geography and Prehistory of Ancient Petra

The history of Petra is inextricably connected to the unique landscape in which it is located. It is therefore important to begin with an understanding of Transjordan's geographical context. Human settlements were located in areas that were specifically chosen to exploit the sparse resources available in the desert, whilst trade and communication routes developed based on the presence of unique natural features.

Petra itself is almost hidden in the slopes of the *Ras an-Naqab* escarpment – a rocky range of hills and cliffs at the highest point of an enormous rift valley which spans Transjordan down to the Gulf of Aqaba. The sandstone cliffs and deep ravines provided the city with ample defensive opportunities and a strategic point from which its inhabitants could oversee and contribute to the trade caravans travelling across the *Wadi Araba* – the desert basin that dominates southern Jordan.

Ras an-Naqab

The rippled rocks that Lawrence of Arabia admires in the introductory quote are composed of layers of Cambrian sandstone, limestone, chalk, marl, and chert. [2] Its iconic red color is the result of centuries of weathering, during which the iron-oxide banding within the rock discolored. It was this scarlet rock that inspired John William Burgon, the English poet and Dean of Chichester Cathedral, to describe Petra as ‘‘the rose-red city, half as old as

time.’’ [3] However, the stone within the rock-cut tombs of the valley reveals much wider spectrum of hues than the exterior surfaces, ranging from deep red to orange to white.

Petra’s unique location and natural features must be seen in relation to the wider landscape and climate of the *Wadi Araba* desert. These factors have shaped the interaction, adaptation, and development of human communities throughout the site’s history. [4] The *Wadi Araba* is flanked to the East and West by high plateaus that rise to between 800 and 1,500 meters above sea level. Petra is found in the *Ras an-Naqab* range of hills on the Eastern edge of the *Wadi Araba.* Rocky, fan-shaped deposits can be found spreading across th arid region south of the ruined city. They are caused by infrequent flash flooding, which over the centuries has disgorged tremendous amounts of sediment from the *Ras an-Naqab* . Much like a river delta, these alluvial fans emerge into the *Wadi Araba* basin, creating an expansive salt flatland known as the *Taba Sabkha* and a nearby mud flat known as the *Gaa’ Es-Saideyeen* . [

The arid climate of the desert results in an average rainfall of only thirty to fifty millimeters per year, and a daily temperature of between 1 0 $^{238}_{92}$ C (5 0 $^{238}_{92}$ F) to 4 0 $^{238}_{92}$ C (10 5 $^{238}_{92}$ F) depending on the time of year. Water management has therefore always been a vital concern for humans living in the region. Few perennial sources of water can be found in the valleys and hills of Transjordan, and groundwater could only be acquired via wells. [6] Ephemeral rivers known as *wadis* were the most common source of water, though they only provided an intermittent supply. Many of these *wadis* descended steeply through the hills of the *Ras an-Naqab* to the *Wadi Araba* , producing deep gorges and ravines that cut through the high plateaus. Five such *wadis* converge on a particular depressed open space, known as a “graben”, in the *Ras an-Naqab* at which Petra was constructed. These river valleys were prone to annual flash-flooding, which provided the successive residents of Petra with both a supply of water and the problem of its management. [7] The most spectacular of these *wadis* is known today as *al-Sī* a 1200 meter long canyon with sandstone walls climbing over 100m above.

These environmental conditions also influenced food supply in the region. The alluvial soils of the *Taba Sabkha* and the *Gaa’ Es-Saideyeen* were composed of a relatively fine-grained and fertile sediment. It was around

these areas of the landscape that much of the earliest agriculture was focused. [8] However, such farming was small-scale and localized. The environmental conditions of the *Wadi Araba* basin have instead made pastoralism the primary means of acquiring food from the Neolithic right up to the modern period. [9]

The movement of humans across Transjordan has been the subject of much academic debate and disagreement, between those who view the desert basin as a barrier to cultural interaction and those who view it as connecting cultures. The rocky alluvial landscape presented formidable obstacles for humans and animals crossing the region. However, the archaeological remains of Petra display a remarkable fusion of elements from European, African, Arabian and Central Asian cultures. The region appears to have served as a corridor of travel and trade, occurring in particular along a North-South orientation that connected the Gulf of Aqaba in the South to the lands of present-day Syria and the Mediterranean coast to the Northwest. East-West trade routes also occurred, which connected Petra with the Spice Routes and Silk Road between the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Far East. [10]

Little is known about the earliest presence of *Homo erectus* in southern Jordan. However, evidence of tools made and used in Petra indicates that there were humans in the region from as far back as the Lower Palaeolithic (ca.200,000 - 120,000 years ago). [11] There has been no evidence discovered of Mousterian settlements in or near Petra, but an enormous archaeological record of biface lithics from the Middle Palaeolithic (ca. 120,000 – 38,000 years ago) has been recovered from the wider landscape, indicating that is was an area that was regularly passed through by itinerant hunter-gatherer groups.

More is known about the Epipalaeolithic (ca. 20,000 - 10,500 years ago) and early Neolithic “Natufian” (10,500 - 7,500 years ago) periods in Petra. It was during this time that the inhabitants of the region changed from hunter-gatherer patterns to create the region’s first sedentary agricultural settlements, according to evidence found at the sites of Wadi Sabra, Wadi al-Mataha, and Sunakh. Ceramic wares started being produced in Petra in the later Neolithic (ca. 7,500 - 6,500 years ago), and have been found at Beidha, a Neolithic settlement North of Petra that was inhabited from at least the eighth millennium BCE. [12] Evidence from Beidha indicates that animals were

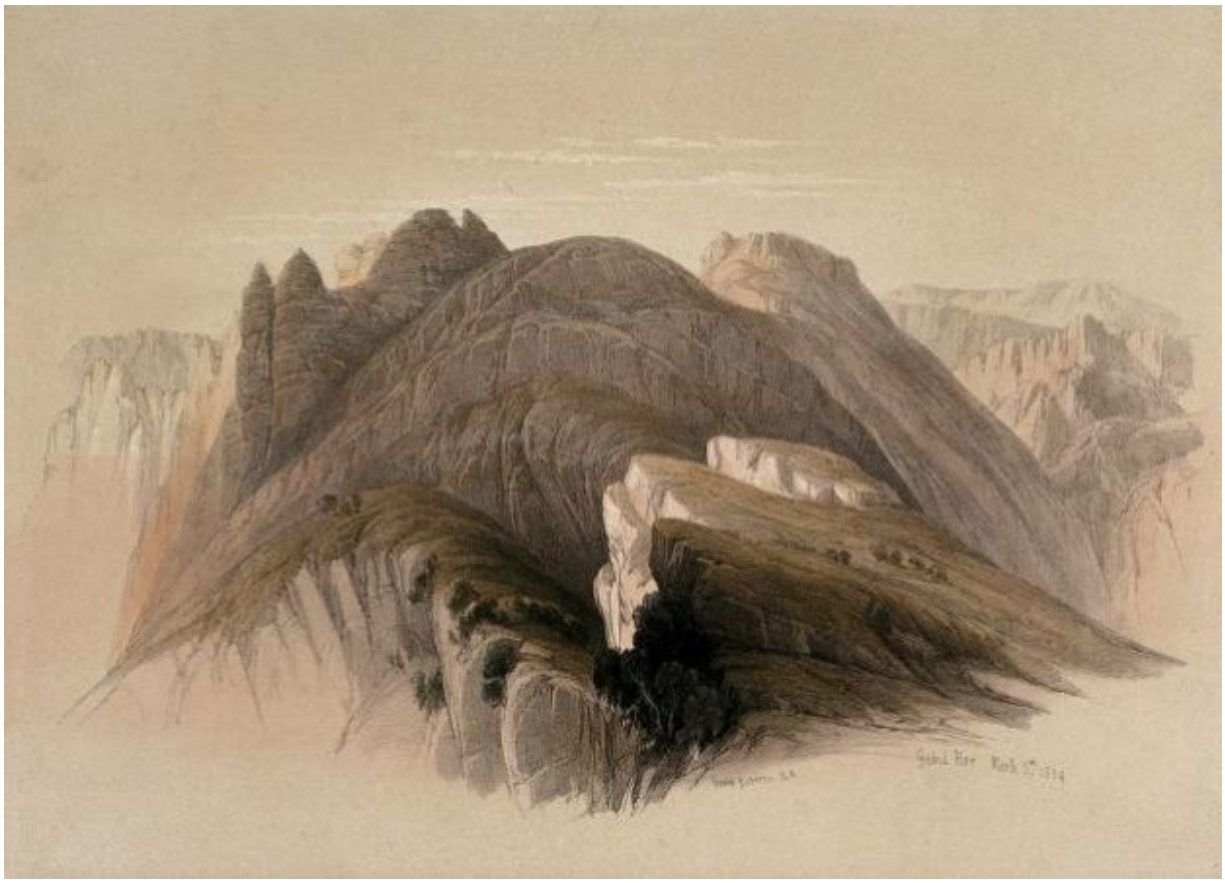
domesticated and that barley and wheat were being grown by the earliest farmers in the region. These early societies were not entirely harmonious; human remains recovered from Neolithic Sabra show that periods of violence between such settlements were not uncommon. [13] One of the closest Neolithic settlements to Petra was the secluded site of Ba´ja, which was also hidden in the *Ras an-Naqab* . [14] The people living in this settlement can be considered the first permanent residents of the graben at which the city of Petra would later grow, and may have been amongst the first to walk down *al-Sīq* .

Copper tools were being made and used during the Calcolithic period (ca. 6,500 - 5,500 years ago), as indicated at the *Wadi Faynan* copper mines. [15] Bronze-working technology later developed, as settlements discovered the secrets to purifying copper ore and smelting the metal with tin and zinc. During the subsequent Bronze Age (ca. 5,500 - 3,200 years ago) there was a growth in urbanism and the rise of the first city-states, though semi-nomadic pastoralism continued. [16] Other city-states were emerging around the Mediterranean and Middle East during this period, including the Egyptians to the West and Phoenicians at the Fertile Crescent.

The Iron Age of Petra began in approximately 1200 BCE. This period has been linked to the presence of the Edomites, a tribal kingdom that was first mentioned by the Egyptians, Assyrians, and the authors of the Old Testament. However, unlike the Biblical accounts of a mythical kingdom that was ruled homogenously by a king appointed by the gods, Edomite society was largely a continuation of tribal kin-based forms of social organization that already existed in the region. [17] The Kingdom of Edom stretched acros southern Jordan from the northern *Wadi Hasa* and the Dead Sea to the southern *Wadi Araba* , possibly even as far as the shores of the Red Sea. Most people lived in rural settlements, and would have rarely engaged with one the localized power centers distributed around the kingdom. Pastoral nomadic communities continued to rove between the hills and lowlands. The Edomites produced fine tools and weapons from metals mined at *Wadi Faynan* , whilst excavations carried out at Tawilan have shown that they possessed a monumental architectural style. [18] They established an enormous stronghol as their capital, Sela, at *Umm al-Biyara* – a rocky escarpment at the center of Petra. [19]

The earliest trade routes that emerged during this period crisscrossed the land between Mesopotamia, Damascus, and Gaza, linking the Kingdom of Edom with the kingdoms of Moab, Ammon, Israel, and Judah, as well as the Egyptian, Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian empires. [20] The Arabians played a major role in these early trade routes, operating caravans that brought frankincense around the continent from at least the 8 th century BCE. Through trade and conquest, the Edomites were heavily influenced by Hellenistic, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian cultures. However, Edom's relations with their neighbors were not always harmonious. A Neo-Babylonian campaign against the Edomites took place in 553 BCE, and the Kingdom of Edom was later annexed by the Persian Empire. [21]

Archaeological remains have frequently been used over time as a means of proving or disproving Biblical events that were said to have taken place in the landscape surrounding Petra. Many theological scholars have claimed that the material remains from these earliest periods are proof of the people, places, and events that took place in the Bible. The Bible mentions the Horites, a people that preceded the Edomites and occupied the region surrounding Mount Seir and Mount Hor. [22] The graben in which Petra is located is watered by the perennial *Ain Mousa* (the "Spring of Moses"), so-called because it was here that Moses was said to have struck a rock with his staff to extract the life-giving stream. [23] Likewise, the prophet Aaron, brother of Moses, was said to have been buried on Mount Hor, today known as the *Jebel Nebi Harun* . [24] During their exodus from Egypt, the Tribes of Israel visited forty two locations known as the Stations of the Exodus, eight of which were places surrounding Petra. [25]



Mt. Hor, Seen from the Cliffs Near Petra

Biblical accounts may be drawn upon to explain the eventual downfall of the Edomites, in the absence of archaeological evidence. King David was said to have conquered the Edomites in the first millennium BCE. The Judeans were also in perpetual conflict with the Kingdom of Edom. Led by King Amaziah, the Judean armies allegedly conquered the Edomite capital of Sela. According to the Biblical accounts, ten thousand defeated Edomites were thrown from the cliffs on the eastern edge of the *Umm al-Biyara* . [26]

Chapter 2: Nabataean Petra

The Edomites occupied Transjordan until around the fourth century BCE, when the region was first occupied by the Nabataeans. Whilst many Edomite patterns of life continued during this transition, the Nabataeans introduced unique architectural and religious traditions to the region, and can be considered to have had the most fundamental impact on the material culture of Petra.

Linguistic analysis indicates that the nomadic tribal groups and power structure that we call the Nabataeans did not originate in Petra, but migrated to the region from the Arabian Peninsula sometime before the fourth century BCE. [27] Most of the documentary evidence that we have of the Nabataeans comes from Greek and Roman accounts, such as reports written by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. These accounts are tinged with imaginative language, portraying the Nabataeans as a semi-mythical culture – preconceptions that would continue until the nineteenth century CE.

However, the Nabataeans were not a homogenous culture, and to precisely define "Nabataean society" is a difficult task. There was no sudden replacement of the population in Transjordan; instead, the Nabataeans were one of a number of distinct tribal groups that had managed to acquire enough power and authority to control the other tribes that occupied the region. A number of different tribes, speaking different languages and living according to their local styles and values, were all incorporated into a pluralistic culture that has since been called "Nabataea." [28] The Nabataeans themselves probably did not identify themselves in any homogenous manner; beyond viewing their king as being in broad control (see Table 1). For the purposes of this book, "Nabataean" should be considered simply as anybody living in the wide and changeable area of land known as Nabataea from the fourth century CE until the Roman conquest in the first century CE. [29] Their presence in areas ebbed and waned with the passing of time, and is indicated by the presence of their distinct ceramic wares, architectural style, and inscriptions left behind in the Nabataean dialect of Aramaic. [30] Major settlements that were under the rule of the Nabataean kings include Elusa and Oboda to the West, Wadi Rumm to the South, Duma to the East, and Bosra to the North. Petra is considered to have been the central capital of the

Nabataean Kingdom . [31]

The Nabataeans had an economy based on pastoralism and agriculture. Cereals and fruits were grown across the kingdom, though for religious reasons they were prohibited from growing wheat, trees, or vineyards under punishment of death. [32] They developed a number of innovative hydraulic technologies to manage the limited supply of water in the region, including aqueducts, dams, reservoirs, and channels. [33] Fish were imported from the coastal regions, as indicated by fish bones found in Petra and surrounding sites. [34] Together, these allowed larger and more permanent settlements to develop during the Nabataean period.

The Nabataeans had a distinctly local religious tradition, though it has not yet received enough academic study to fully differentiate it from the other major 'Western' and 'Eastern' religions that existed in the Near East at that time. Many temples were built upon sites that were considered sacred in the preceding Edomite period, for example at Jebel Ramm, south of Ḥawāra. [35] The Nabataeans were believed to have worshiped a wide number of deities, and many of their religious beliefs were continuations of those that were established by the preceding Edomites. [36] Thus, the Nabataeans worshiped Qos, Baal, and the Egyptian god Isis. [37] However, recent scholarship has revealed the two major gods of the Nabataean faith: Dushara and Al-Uzza. [38]

Table 1: The reigns of the Kings of Nabataea [39]

King	Reign
Aretas I	168 BCE
Aretas II	c. 120/110–96 BCE
Obodas I	c. 96–85 BCE
Rabbel I	85/84 BCE
Aretas III	84–c. 62 BCE

Obodas II	c. 62–59 BCE
Malichus I	59–30 BCE
Obodas III	30–9 BCE
Syllaeus & Aretas IV	9 BCE
Aretas IV	9 BC– 40 CE
Malichus II	40–70 CE
Rabbel II	70–106 CE

It is not precisely known how far back the Nabataeans began to visit Petra, though a combination of documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that it was no earlier than the sixth century BCE. They did not immediately settle in the valley, and instead visited seasonally as part of a semi-nomadic lifestyle. This is indicated by the accounts of the Alexandrian satrap Antigonus I Monophthalmus, founder of the Antigonid dynasty after Alexander the Great's death in 323 BCE. Antigonus attacked Petra in 312 BCE to find it completely deserted and without any manmade structures. [40] The earliest dateable archaeological evidence of Nabataean construction in the area is from the first century BCE. [41]

The Nabataeans managed to create an oasis at Petra, through their masterful control of annual flash floods with a system of dams, channels, and cisterns. [42] The dry, mountainous terrain and spontaneous winter rains presented both challenges and opportunities for the Nabataeans. Some reliable natural springs existed in the surrounding area, including Evrona, Yotvata, Gharandal, et-Tayyiba, and Rahel. [43] In addition, some areas had a sufficiently high water table so as to enable wells to be dug to collect the

groundwater, such as those found at Be'er Menuha and Bir Madhkur. [44] Thi allowed them to farm the surrounding land that would otherwise be dry and barren, though pastoralism likely continued alongside sedentary farming lifestyles.

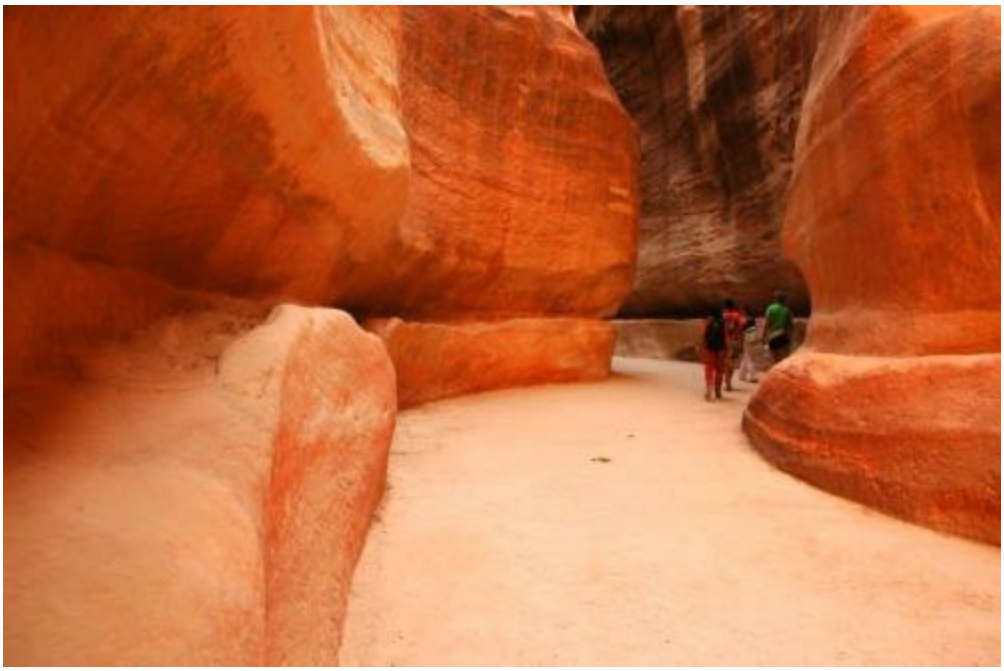
In addition to their mastery of water management, the Nabataeans were skilled stonemasons. The dominant Cambrian sandstone of Petra is of medium strength and with a uniform texture, which made it ideal for quarrying and dressing ashlar blocks, constructing freestanding buildings, and carving decorative facades. [45] In addition, a number of anti-seismic features were incorporated into their buildings, to ensure that they did not collapse during one of the region's occasional earthquakes. [46]

Al-'Uzzá and her male counterpart, Dushara, were the main deities worshipped in Nabataean Petra, alongside a number of other foreign and local gods and goddesses. [47] The cult of Obodas, the deified Nabataean king, was established in Petra by the end of the first century CE, and continued well into the Roman period. The Egyptian god Isis was also worshiped, as indicated by the carved Isis-Tyche on the Khazneh, suggesting that the Nabataeans freely adopted deities from other theological traditions. [48] The Edomite god Qos continued to be worshipped, as indicated by a stele found at Tawilan depicting the star and crescent bow associated with this deity. [49]

It was the Nabataeans that made most of the physical modifications to the valley that exist today. Many standing structures were built in the valley; however, almost all of those from the Nabataean period have been lost, either through earthquakes, weathering, or by human hand. Their architectural style was as distinctive as the techniques used to build these structures, as they freely combined their personal aesthetic tastes with designs found in the Greco-Roman world: Hellenistic, Ptolemaic Egyptian, Seleucid Syrian, and Judean. [50] This resulted in a uniquely cosmopolitan fusion of art and architecture.

There were numerous routes along which Petra could be approached. From the South, travelers would follow a trail along Mount Hor, upon which the tomb of Aaron is located. From the North they would descend from the high plateaus into the Petra valley. However, the most common – and impressive –

mode of access was from the East along the deep, narrow gorge known as *al-Sīq* (“the shaft”). This natural ravine is between 91–182 meters (299–597 feet) deep. Approaching the entrance to *al-Sīq*, visitors would pass a number of rock-cut tombs and the Djinn Blocks – large carved stone slabs which represented the Nabataean deities. [51]



The Siq

At the end of *al-Sīq* is the stunning carved façade of *al-Khazneh* (“the Treasury”). One of many tombs carved into the pink and red sandstone, this structure represents a quintessentially Nabataean style of architecture, though with definite Hellenistic influences. [52] Passing a number of rock-cut tombs, the visitor then enters the city proper. Although later Roman and Byzantine developments obscured most of the Nabataean-period structures in the city, one particularly notable structure has survived on the valley floor: the *Qasr al-Bint* Temple. This structure was built in the first century BCE by Obodas III, and is believed to have been the chief temple of the city. Another Nabataean monument can be found at the top of the steep slopes west of the *Qasr al-Bint* . Known as *ad-Dayr* (“the Monastery”), this was the religious center of the Cult of Obodas – the deified Nabataean king.

ad-Dayr, “the Monastery”

The Great Temple is a 7,560 square meter complex located just south of *al-Sīq* . Visitors passed under a monumental entrance – the Propylaeum – to reach a large courtyard known as the Lower Temenos. Covered passageways known as *cryptoportici* were built on the western, northern, and eastern edges of the courtyard, their colonnaded passageways interrupted by decorated *exedrae* (recesses) towards the south. [53] Three staircases led from the southern edge of the courtyard to the Upper Temenos, where the Great Temple itself was located. Between the upper and lower courtyards was a retaining wall fitted with carved Hellenistic relief panels, which juxtaposed the sacred Nabataean stones (*betyls*) that were set into the walls of the *cryptoportici* . [54] The style of the Great Temple building was heavily influenced by Hellenistic architecture and, according to some interpretations, was built by stonemasons from Alexandria. [55] Other influences seem to hav come from the East, as indicated by the elephant-head capitals adorning the structure’s columns. [56] The Great Temple is filled with diverse aniconic and figurative sculptures and carved stone reliefs depicting Greco-Roman triumphal wreaths. [57] A sword relief was carved to the rear of the temple, which may have been a dedication to the stonemasons or to the rock from which the sandstone was cut. [58]

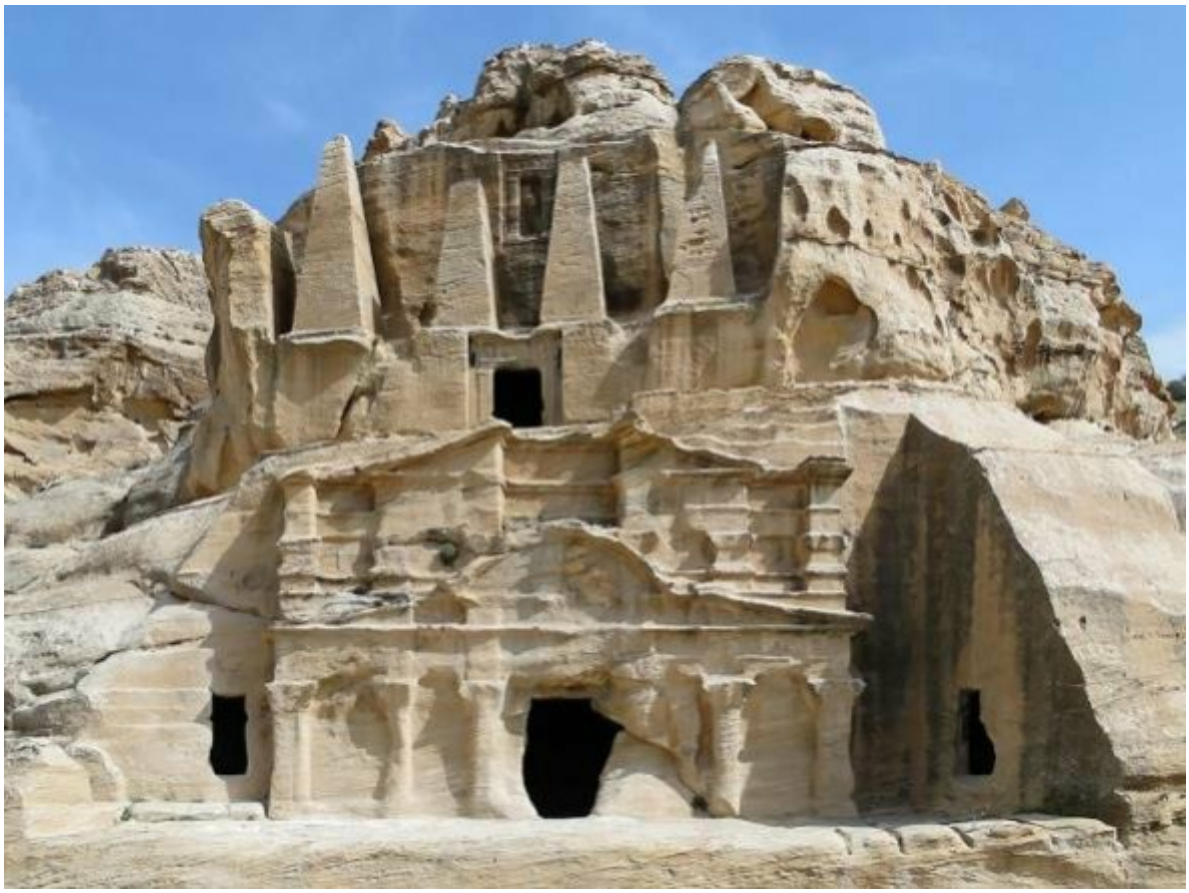
The Nabataeans carved freestanding sculptures from the local stone, as well as from imported marble and limestone. [59] There was a juxtaposition of two distinct sculptural styles in the city, which indicates both the long term persistence of local sculptural traditions alongside the selective appropriation of foreign art.

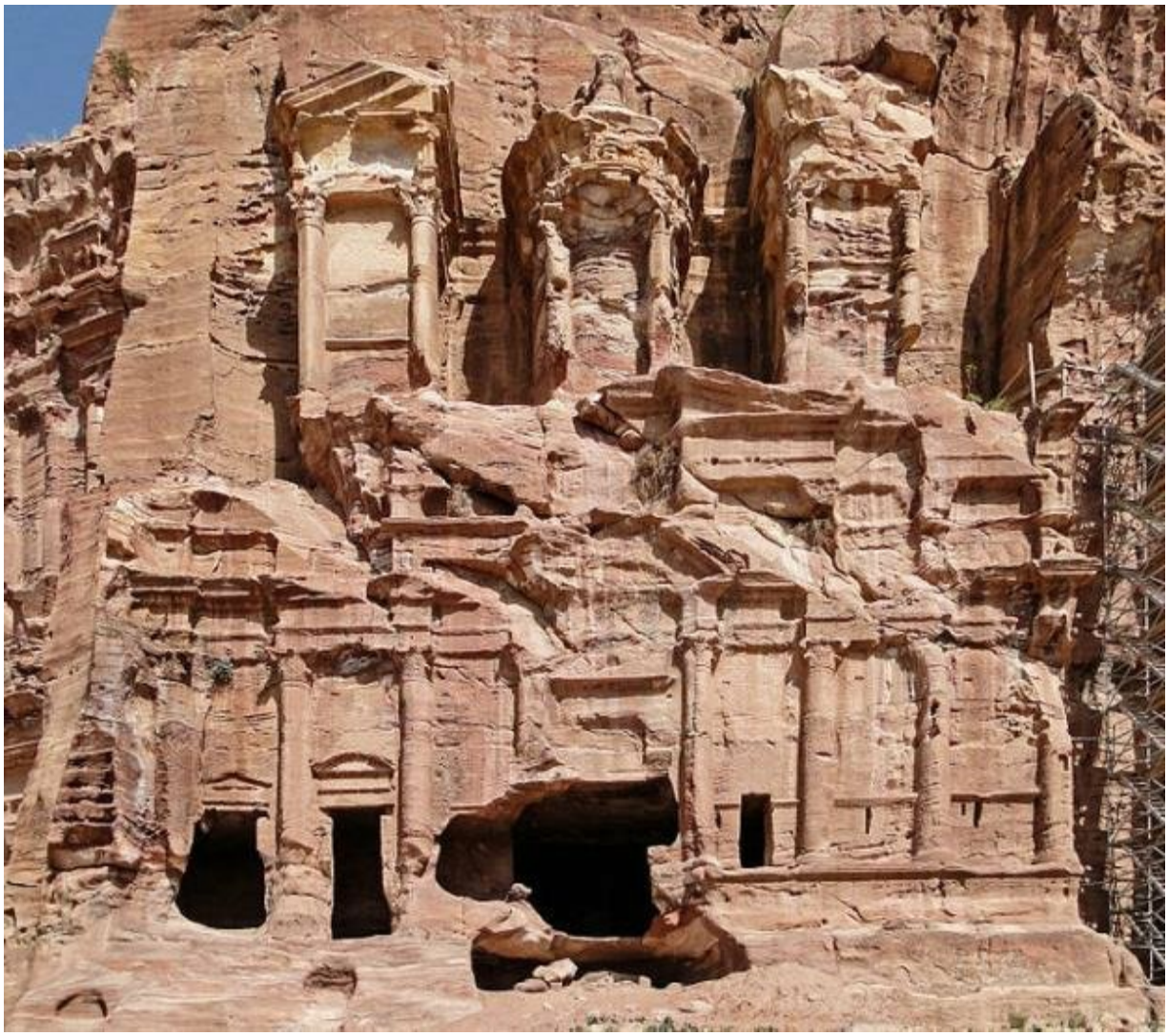
The first of these sculptural styles was aniconic. This was a tradition found across the Arabian world by which it was forbidden for human representations of deities to be worshiped as sacred objects. [60] A large amount of carved blocks were distributed around Petra, each of which was dedicated to a particular god or goddess. Nabataean *betyls* – free-standing blank or bas-relief carved slabs – were set into the walls of Petra's freestanding structures with plaster. They also made small, portable limestone altars that are thought to be the aniconic representations of the deities Dushara and Al-'Uzza. [61]

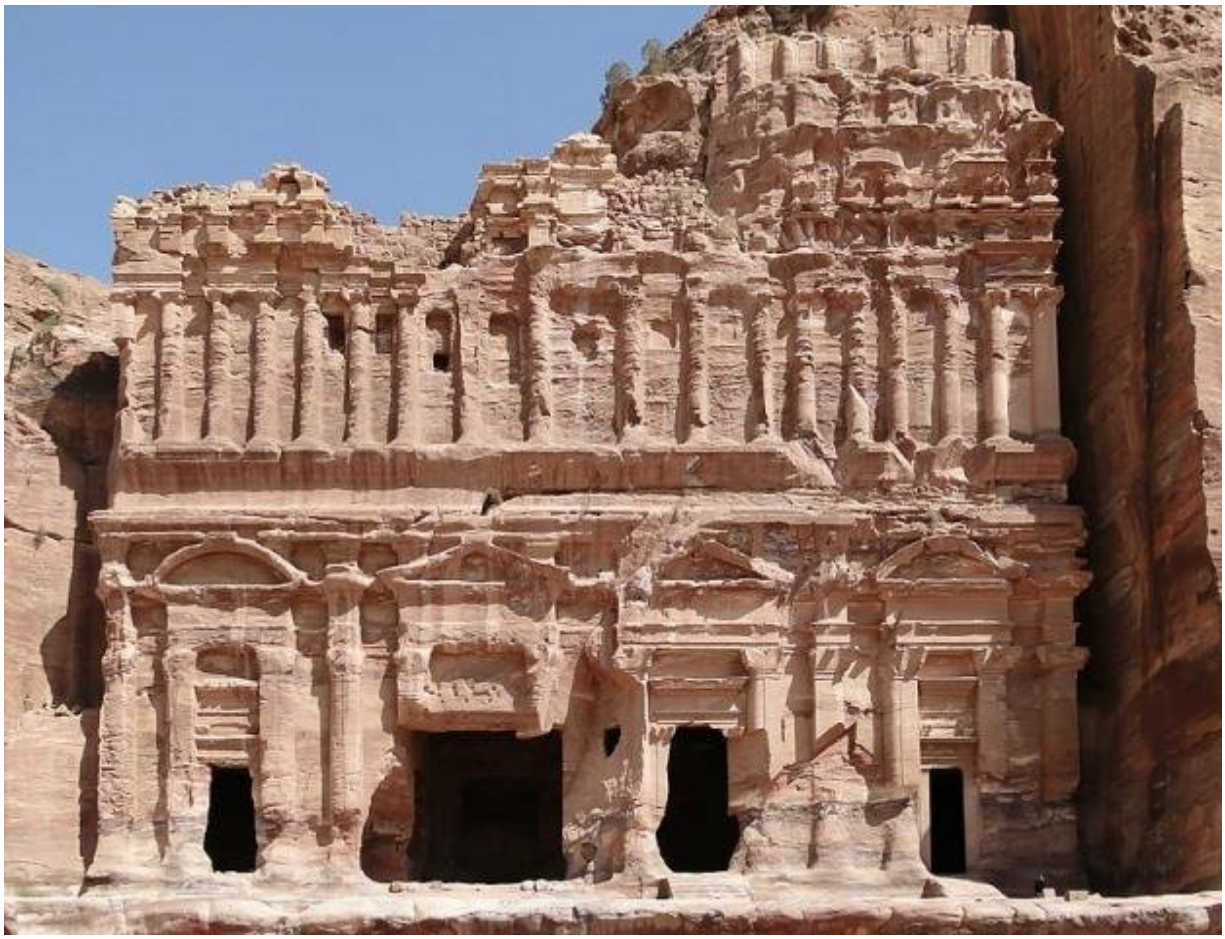
The second sculptural style was of anthropomorphic statues that were made in particular during the first century CE, and are believed to have been a result of the Nabataeans adopting foreign styles to their own local values. [62] For example, a statue of Isis sitting on a throne was discovered in the valley, identified through an inscription on its base. [63] Figural reliefs of Hellenisti male and female figures with empty slots for a separately carved head were also found throughout Petra, in addition to carved theatre masks. [64] One of the finest iconic sculptural panels is that of figure resembling the Greek deity Tyche (Roman Fortuna), the daughter of Zeus and Aphrodite and deity of luck and the well-being of a city. The Petraean statue depicts Tyche holding a cornucopia, a symbol of wealth and a prosperous harvest. [65]

Tyche

Two types of tombs exist in abundance throughout Petra: the so-called pylon-tombs of a Nabataean style, and the Greco-Roman type, with elaborate facades reminiscent of Roman temples. The Nabataean type pylon-tombs consist of a ground level door set into the centre of the facade, and was topped by a richly decorated parapet. They were quite similar to the tower-tombs built in the northern Arabian Peninsula, such as those at Mada'in Saleh, which was the southernmost settlement of the Nabataean kingdom. [66] The latter style is a combination of Arabian, Greek, Egyptian, and Syrian elements. Most of the tombs at Petra only have one single chamber, though some have up to four interconnected chambers. [67]







Bernard Gagnon’s pictures of some of Petra’s tombs

David Bjorgen's picture of a tomb

The Nabataeans at Petra buried their dead in a number of ways. Some bodies were interred in small chambers in the cave floor that were covered with stone slabs. [68] Others were placed within niches carved in the walls known as *loculi* . The *loculus* -type of burial was popular across the Graeco-Roman Levant, from Jerusalem to Palmyra and Alexandria. [69] The Petraean type of *loculus* was relatively tall, and typically one meter wide and two to three meters deep. Some tombs are bristling with *loculi* on all of the chamber' walls.

Numerous historic documents associate the Nabataeans with the overland trade routes that crossed Transjordan from southern Arabia to the Mediterranean. The sand dunes and salt flats of the Wadi Araba were not considered impassable terrain. Instead, the desert was a thriving area of transport and interaction between the peoples of the Near East. Travel would have mainly been done on foot or with pack animals, such as camels and donkeys, as wheeled carts would have had great difficulty traversing the uneven terrain. [70]

Petra was strategically located on the trade corridors crossing the Arabian Peninsula, between Gaza and Ptolemaic Egypt to the West, Judea and Syria to the North, Aqaba and the Red Sea to the South, and the Silk Roads crossing Eurasia to the East. Exotic goods, such as incense, spices, silk, gold, and ivory, were traded between Asia and the Mediterranean via Petra. [71] Frankincense and other aromatic materials were burned on small, carved limestone altars that have been found around the Nabataean kingdom. [72] Th Nabataeans appear to have functioned as middlemen in these transactions, by establishing caravanserais along the routes between Petra and Aqaba. [73] A thriving economic center emerged at Bir Madhkur, northwest of Petra and on the Petra-Gaza trade route. [74] By at least the first century CE they were taxing traders for twenty five percent of the worth of their goods that passed through their lands. [75] This trade facilitated the spread of religious ideas anc practices around the kingdom.

Chapter 3: Petra and the Roman Empire

The Nabataean economy flourished as the Pax Romana (Roman peace between 31 BCE and 180 CE) benefited merchants moving from Syria to Alexandria along the Mediterranean coast. However, the Romans continued to spread their territories east into the Levant during the early centuries CE. Although the Nabataeans aided the Romans in the First Roman-Jewish War (66 – 73 CE), in 106 CE the Romans annexed the Kingdom of Nabataea. [76] It was incorporated into the province of *Arabia Petraea* , with Petra as its capital.

Arabia Petraea during the time of the Roman Empire

The former Nabataean settlements of the province served as centers of both military rule and civilian administration for the new Roman rulers. [77] They developed an improved network of roads that facilitated faster and safer communication and trade across the region, and enabled the Roman armies to travel quickly across the *Wadi Araba* . The main route that they developed wa the *Via Nova Traiana* , which was built in the early second century CE to connect Aqaba and the Red Sea to Nova Trajana Bostra in Syria (present day Bosra). [78] The Nabataean connections between Petra and Gaza also persiste

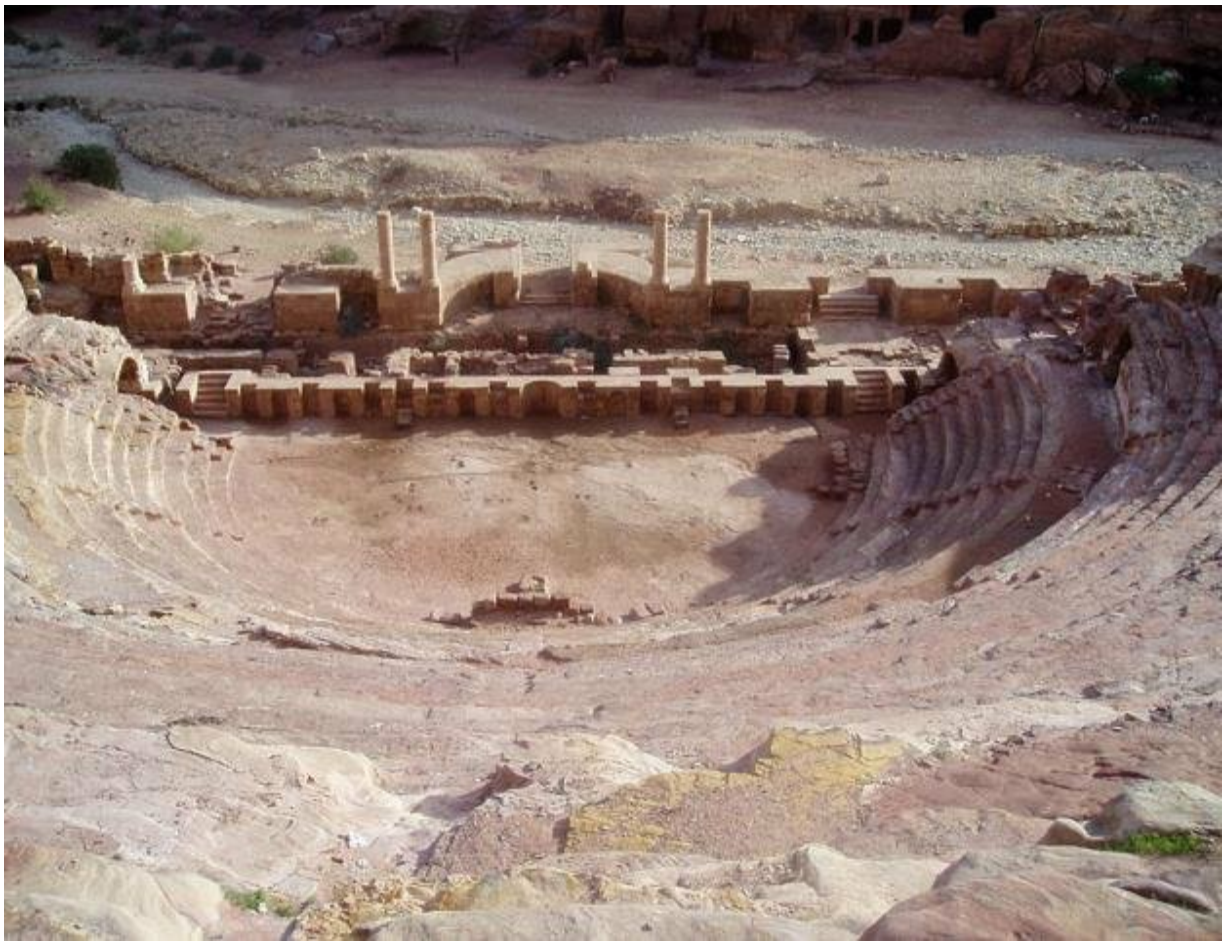
as a particularly active Roman route. [79] They continued to make use of the fortresses and caravanserais built at strategic locations by the Nabataeans, and built a number of their own forts at Gharandal, Bir Madhkur, and Yotvata. [80] The most common type of fort was the rectangular *quadriburgic* a design that would continue into the Crusader period. [81]

The Romans made a number of modifications and additions to Petra, leaving behind a fascinating material record of their own, yet also obscuring that which came before. They took full advantage of the defensive opportunities provided by the landscape in which Petra was situated. For example, *Al-Sīq* offered an easily-defendable gateway into the Petra Valley. The high ridge to the north provided an incomparable panoramic view of the city below and the opening of the ravine, and also allowed the Romans to oversee an alternative entrance to the valley via the *Wadi Abu'Ullayqa* . [82] Their most notable contribution is that of a colonnaded road – the Cardo Maximus – running across the graben. Many of Petra's most notable sites are located along this road: the Great Temple complex, the Temenos Gate, the Qasr Al-Bint Temple, and innumerable rock-cut tombs.

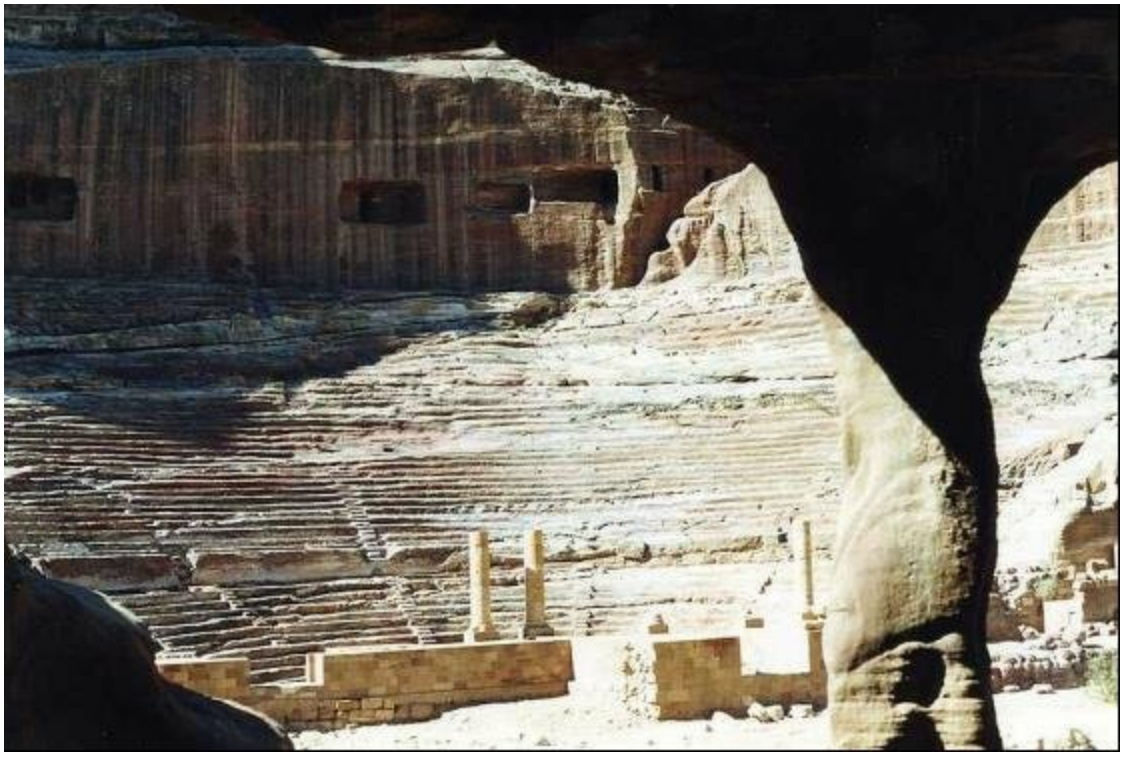
Pictures of the Cardo Maximus and a gate along the road

A picture of ornamental ruins along the road

The Romans also built baths and a garden with an artificial lake. [83] A classical amphitheatre was carved at the base of the *en-Nejr* mountain in the valley. Many of the rock-cut tombs are within view of the theatre, suggesting that the landscape played a part in the ceremonies and performances that took place there.



Jordan Klein's aerial view of the Roman theater at Petra

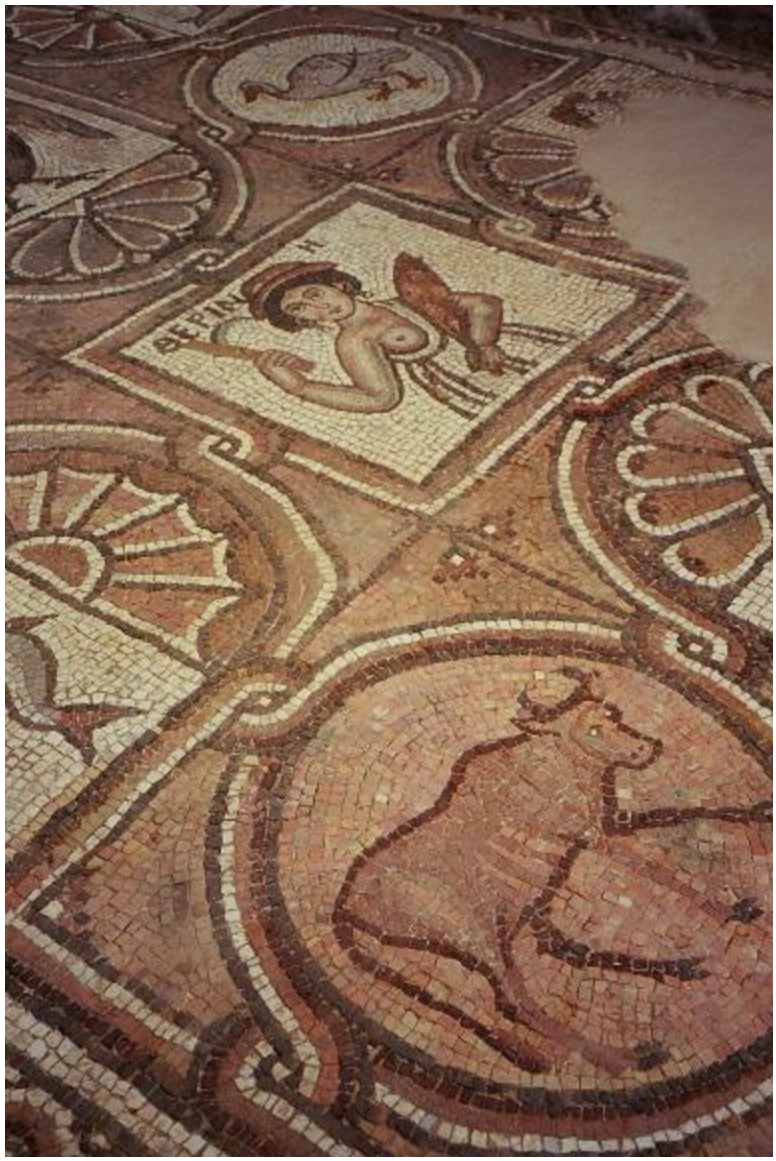


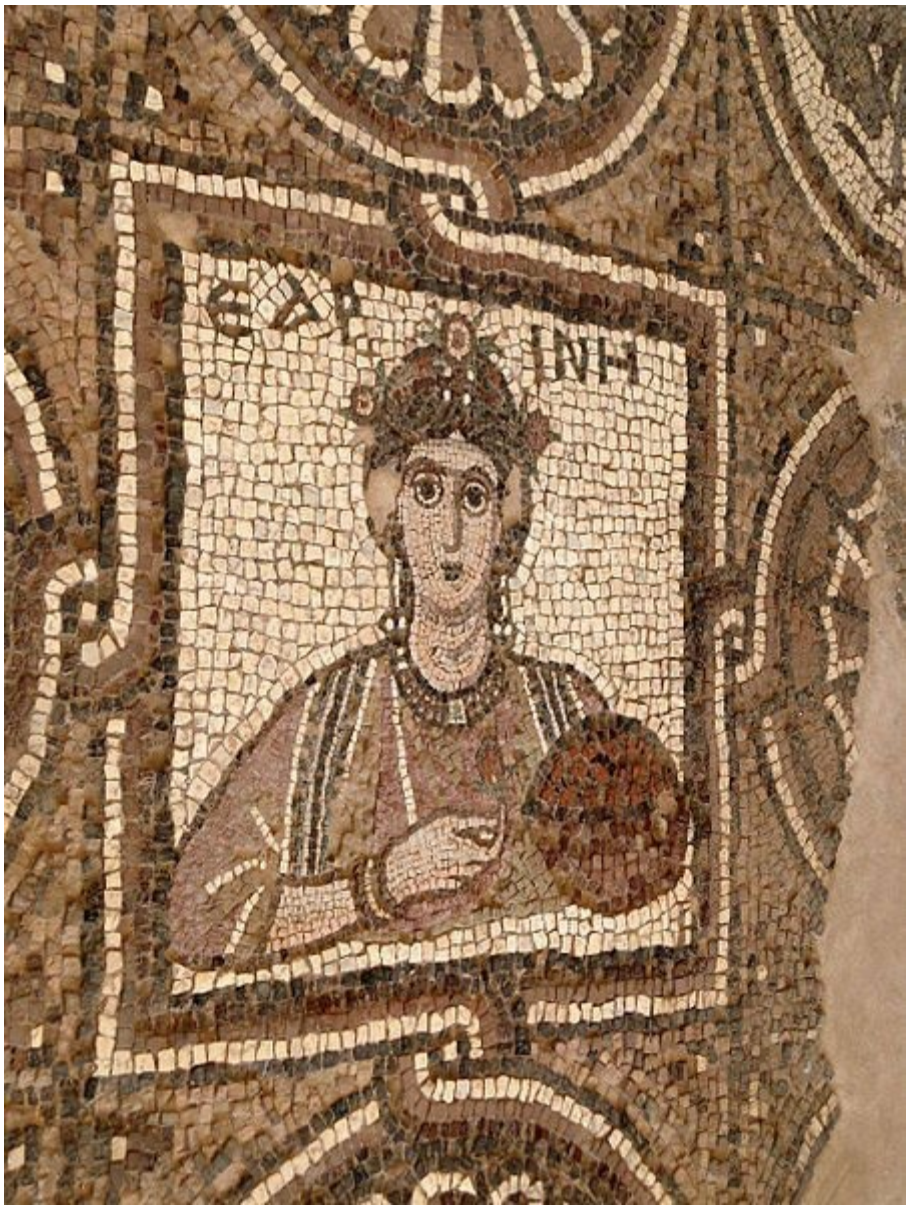
Pictures of the Roman theater from the ground

Under Emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305 CE) the Roman Empire was divided into western and eastern halves, taking the eastern part as his personal domain. Under this Tetrarchy system the divided eastern part of the empire

experienced many restrictions to personal freedom and a greater tax burden on the people. Diocletian's successor, Constantine, adopted Byzantium (present-day Istanbul) as his capital in the 330s, which became Constantinople – the largest Christian city in the world at that time.

The Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the Byzantine Empire, contributed to the spread of Christian institutions across Transjordan. Some of the most notable ecclesiastical sites that they established in the region include Madaba, Jerash and an Oratory of St. George at Rihab – a location claimed to be one of the earliest churches in the world. [84] Christianity was brought to Petra during the fourth century CE, when the city was incorporated into the Byzantine province of Palaestina Salutaris. [85] The city became the administrative capital and archdiocese of the province. [86] One bishop of Petra is known by name: Asterius, an Orthdox Christian that was established in Petra by the Byzantine Emperor, Julian, during the mid-fourth century. [87] The Byzantine city was quite small in comparison with the Nabataean and Western Roman periods. According to the Petra Church papyri, agriculture continued to play a major role in the economy. Orchards, vineyards, and grain farming are all described in the documents. [88]





Pictures of a mosaic in the Byzantine Church of Petra

Many ecclesiastical structures were established at Petra by the Byzantines. The earliest was the so-called Urn Tomb, a Nabataean tomb converted into a Christian church in 446 CE, and in use until the early seventh century. [89] Three Byzantine churches were built on the slopes to the north of the Roman Cardo Maximus. These churches were all based on a standard Roman church layout found across the empire: a central columned nave flanked by two aisles and ending with an apse. They are all generally oriented along an East-West axis. The congregation would have entered through the narthex on the western side of the building.

The earliest of these churches is the so-called Ridge Church, located on the ridge at the top of the slope. This church was extensively decorated with mosaics, and contained a large cistern underneath the nave that was fed by collected rainwater. [90] The Blue Chapel was a major ecclesiastical complex constructed south of the Ridge Church. It was a large structure built on multiple layers which were connected by a staircase. The striking blue columns give the complex its name, and are likely *spolia* – reused architectura features that were scavenged from pre-existing structures in the landscape. [91] The spatial layout of the complex indicates that it was not used for large communal gatherings. Instead, evidence of a throne flanked on both sides with *synthronon* – curved benches for the clergy – suggests that this was the site from which the bishop of Petra resided and operated. [92] Other notable features include a latticework pulpit and reliquary, both made of stone with a similar bluish hue to that of the columns.

Further South from this complex is the Petra Church and an adjacent baptistery, where Petra's communities would have adopted the Christian faith. The plain, stone nave of the building was built between two aisles, the floors and walls of which were covered in ornate mosaics similar to those found in the Ridge Church. The geometric background of these mosaics was decorated with a border of birds, animals and fish, and in the centre were personified representations of the Wisdom, Earth, the Ocean, and the Four Seasons. Further decorations include representations of fishermen and an ornate vase. [93] A hoard of Byzantine ecclesiastical documents dating from when the church was consumed by fire in the sixth century was recovered from the Petra Church in 1993. They were written in a pre-Islamic Arabic language, but used Greek letters – the official script of the Byzantine Empire. [94] These letters recount mostly administrative matters of a family living in Petra between 537 and 593 CE. The central figure was Theodoro, an archdeacon of Petra and a major landowner in the surrounding region. The documents indicate that the Petra Church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. [95]

Syncretism is a process of religious fusion and assimilation, by which beliefs and practices from one religious tradition are blended with those of another. [96] Archaeology is well-suited for examining religious rituals and practices; however, in the real world conversion is not always absolute, and

interpreting the beliefs of past communities is often a matter of guesswork. The Roman pantheon and preceding local beliefs may have assimilated with Christianity in Petra. Parallels between the immaculate conception and virgin birth of Jesus Christ and the Nabataean virgin goddess Chaabou (Dusares) were made by the 4 th century bishop in Cyprus, Epiphanius of Salamis. [97] Worship of Qos continued well into the Roman period of occupation. [98] The use of betyls in the region seems to have blossomed in the third century CE, alongside a surge of interest in the deity Dushara. [99] This fusion of religious beliefs continued well into the Islamic periods, which we now turn to.

Although an earthquake in 363 CE and a second in 551 CE caused much damage to the valley's structures, Petra appears to have continued as a thriving Byzantine community until the early seventh century. It was these earthquakes that are believed to have demolished the Great Temple, *Qasr al-Bint* , and most of the freestanding structures in the city – most of which were never rebuilt. [100] Later generations of residents in the city lived their lives amongst these earlier ruins.

There were a number of factors that led to a steep decline of the settlement at Petra from the 6 th century onwards. The invasion of a neo-Persian power under the Sassanid Empire in 541 CE disrupted the relative peace that existed under Roman rule, whilst Petra's role on regional trade routes diminished with the predominance cheaper and faster sea-based trade routes. A particularly strong earthquake occurred in 749 CE followed by a devastating period of flash flooding, which accentuated the general lack of maintenance of the buildings and roads by the residents of the valley. [101]

Chapter 4: Islam and Petra during the Crusades

Islam spread to Petra sometime between 629 and 632 CE, though there was no major occupation of the ruined city during this early Islamic periods. [102] By the Umayyad period (638–750 CE) the city appears to have been completely abandoned. [103] However, villages in the surrounding landscape continued to be occupied, and during the late Islamic periods Petra and its surrounding villages went through a population growth. [104] Some seventh century Islamic pottery has been recovered from the ruins, as has a tombstone of al-Hussein Bin ‘Abdullah, who died in 787 CE. [105]

The religious significance of the landscape would have been apparent to Muslims, who saw Mûsâ ibn Amram and Harun – the Islamic names for Moses and Aaron – as prophets of the coming of Muhammad. *Jebel Nebi Harun* (Mount Hor) was of key religious significance as Aaron’s alleged burial place, and the shrine on top of the mountain was refurbished and rededicated during the 14 th century. [106]

However, many of the preceding beliefs continued throughout the Islamic period. The worship of al-Uzza, Manat, and Allat was adapted to Islam, who described these deities as the “Daughters of Allah” in the Koran. [107] Christianity also continued to be practiced alongside Islam in Transjordan. [108] A Byzantine church excavated at Jabal Harun has provided evidence of activity between the seventh and eighth centuries. [109]

Starting with the First Crusade in 1096, thousands of soldiers were sent to the Holy Land by the church to reclaim Jerusalem. At first they were successful; the crusading armies managed to establish a Christian-ruled kingdom in Muslim Palestine. However, ultimately the crusades were futile, culminating with the fiasco of the Fourth Crusade (1204), during which the European armies sacked Constantinople (Byzantium). By the late 1200s the region had reverted to uniform Muslim rule.

Petra came under the control of European crusaders during the First Crusade in a campaign led by Baldwin I. He unsuccessfully attempted to conquer the Wadi Mousa in 1100, but eventually managed to defeat the

forces of Atabeg Toghtekin of Damascus in 1107. [110] In 1115 Baldwin mobilized to southern Transjordan, establishing a number of fortified garrisons along the key trade and communication routes between Syria, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula. [111] The region of southern Jordan becam the Crusader Lordship of Oultrejordain, defended by monumental castles such as those at Shoubak, Ajloun, Habis, and Azrak. Petra came under Baldwin's control during the 1115 campaign. The ruined city became part of the barony of Al-Karak.

Baldwin Entering Edessa

Baldwin's soldiers established three castles at Petra. The castle of Wu-ayra was built in 1115 CE. Much like the Roman *quadriburgia,* this rectangular for was located a short distance north of the main entrance to Petra. The castle was featured an elaborate system of defensive installations, including high towers and walls, and was accessible only through a narrow tunnel hewn

through the sandstone rock of the cliffs upon which it was built. [112] Another castle, known as Jebal Habis, was established in the heart of Petra at the base of the *Umm al-Biyara* mountain. It was accessed from the *Qasr al-Bint* via a series of forecourts and heavily defended staircases. The third castle was the so-called High Place Castle, built a few kilometers south of Jebal Habis, though this is the smallest fortification and likely served as little more than a watchtower.

Following the crusader's defeat at the Battle of Hattin in 1187 CE, southern Transjordan came under the control of the Ayyubid sultan Salah ad-Din, also known as Saladin. Although excavations at the nearby village of Khirbet Nawafleh have shown that Petra and its environs experienced a brief population growth during this period, by the end of the 13 th century Petra was almost completely uninhabited. [113]

Despite its abandonment, Petra was not entirely "forgotten" by all. However, there has been little academic attention given to the periods between the 13 th and 19 th centuries at Petra, and there remain only scant accounts of human activity amongst the ruins over the whole period before its "rediscovery" by Europe. In 1217 a Christian pilgrim, Master Thetmar, discovered a small chapel with two Greek monks in the deserted ruins of Petra. [114] Petra continued to served as an important stopping-off point on the trade and Hajj routes between the Arabian Peninsula and the rest of the Mamluk and Ottoman lands. The Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, Baibars, visited Aaron's tomb on Mount Hor and one of the crusader castles in 1276 CE. [115]

Chapter 5: The European Rediscovery of Petra

Inscriptions found at Sinai were first believed to have been left behind by the wandering Children of Israel, a theory posited by the 6 th century Alexandrian merchant and monk Cosmas Indicopleustes. This attractive narrative resurfaced in the eighteenth century. However, there remained much confusion as nobody had yet managed to decipher the script and there was a dearth of evidence to work with. Therefore, a series of expeditions by European explorers into Transjordan took place in the nineteenth century to try and discover more inscriptions, ruins, and artifacts. [116]

Johann Ludwig Burckhardt was born in Basel and educated in Leipzig, Göttingen and Cambridge, He worked for the British Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa before being sent to Syria in 1809. The next three years were spent in Aleppo, during which he perfected his Arabic language skills and adopted a local costume. Armed with these, he managed to pose as an Arab and convinced a local guide to bring him to Petra. This "discovery" initiated a flurry of activity by those that wanted to visit and learn more about this semi-mythical site.

Expeditions to Transjordan were quite dangerous at that time. In 1811 the German explorer Ulrich Jasper Seetzen was assassinated in Yemen after returning from his expedition to the Hauran plateau in north-western Jordan. [117] Despite the dangers, in 1828 French explorers Léon de Laborde and Louis Linant de Bellefonds made their way to Petra disguised as native Bedouin, and produced a stunning book in 1838: " *Journey Through Arabia Petraea; To Mount Sinai, and the Excavated City of Petra, the Edom of the Prophecies* ." In 1840 the renowned explorer and Egyptologist William John Bankes mounted an expedition to the ruined city. Bankes had to deal with intimidating Bedouin sheiks and impassable Ottoman officials, and only managed to complete his expedition due to his powers of negotiation. [118] He made it to the *Ras an-Naqab,* yet under the veiled threats of his Bedou guide Bankes was instructed that he had only two days to complete his work. In that time the skilled draughtsman managed to create a collection of the first drawings of the monuments and inscriptions ever made at Petra.

By the 19 th century Petra had not yet been linked to the Nabataeans. Bankes

subsequently linked the inscriptions he recorded at Petra to those found in Sinai, which had been recently deciphered by the German Orientalist, Eduard Friedrich Ferdinand Beer of Leipzig. [119] Beer proposed that the deciphered Sinaitic inscriptions linked the Rose City with the Nabataean kingdom and attributed them to pilgrims travelling through Petra in the early centuries CE. Bankes' evidence supported the hypothesis; however, the Nabataean script would not be deciphered for another eighty years, under the combined efforts of many academicians.

A number of scientific investigations took place in Transjordan took place at the turn of the century. A typology and interpretation of the diverse carved facades of Petra was completed by the German Semitic philologist, Rudolf-Ernst Brünnow, and the Austrian historian, Alfred von Domaszewski, in the early 1900s. [120] Alois Musil, and Gustaf Dalman each recorded the layout and features of the monuments at Petra, contributing to a corpus of material that were interpreted by scholars such as Abbé Jean Starcky and Józef Tadeusz Milik. Excavations took place in 1929 by the British archaeologists George Horsfield and his Agnes Conway together with the Palestinian folklorist Tawfiq Canaan, and they were soon followed by a number of European, American and local projects. [121] Gradually an understanding of the Nabataean kingdom emerged, though it seemed that with each new inscription deciphered, drawing made, and artifact recovered a multitude of new questions emerged.

Although the First and Second World Wars caused much disruption to the region, archaeological investigations continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, was an active archaeologist in the region before he rallied the Bedouin and joined the Arab Revolt (1916-1918). He went on a number of research expeditions with his Syrian assistant, Selim "Dahoum" Ahmed. [122] On one such expedition he was joined by archaeologist Leonard Woolley, with whom he surveyed the Negev desert as far south as the Gulf of Aqaba, discovering much about the Nabataean and Babylonian periods of activity in the region. [123] The Australian adventurer and photographer James Francis Hurley visited Petra during the Second World War. Serving under the First Australian Imperial Force, he took a number of photographs of *al-Khazneh* and the Nabataean tombs that he found in the ruined city. [124]

They discovered one of the richest archaeological landscapes in the region, if not the world; a palimpsest of Neolithic, Edomite, Nabataean, Roman, Byzantine, Crusader, and Islamic material remains. This presented the difficult task of untangling a straightforward story about what happened in Petra's past – a problem that was accentuated by the site's state of preservation. Few inscriptions survived on the walls of the caves and buildings in the valley, as the stucco used to plaster the walls was degraded by natural and human processes over the centuries. Freestanding structures in the valley were damaged by successive earthquakes, which had resulted in the burial of Petra's earliest occupation beneath many layers of rubble and detritus. [125] Weakened with age and cracked open by earthquakes, many of the tombs were found to have been looted, and the human and artefactual remains that they once contained missing. [126] These are problems that have continued to the present; Biclinium No. 849 is a cave chamber that contains impressive Nabataean wall paintings, which have been severely damaged during the 1980s and 1990s by looters attempting to remove them from the walls to be sold on the illegal antiques market. [127]

Chapter 6: Contemporary Petra

Petra has been the focal point of most heritage management schemes in Transjordan, both before and after independence. During the First World War, British aid to the Arabs against the Turkish-Empire and Germans led to a surge in nationalist ideology in the Near East. In June 1916 the Hashemite armies started the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Turks, with the intention of securing an independent Arab state. Although the Ottomans were ultimately defeated in 1918, Jordan would not become an independent state until 1946. On May 25 th that year King Abdullah I, then Emir under the British Mandate for Palestine, became recognized as King of Transjordan. The Antiquities Law was passed in 1935, by which all immovable heritage in the country belongs to the government. Land that was found to contain antiquities would have its ownership divulged to the state, regardless of who possessed it before. Under this law, Petra became the property of first the British Mandate for Palestine and then the Kingdom of Jordan. [128]

A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have operated in Jordan since 1966, starting with the Royal Society of Conservation of Nature. The Petra National Trust was established in 1989, and to this day remains the most active organization managing Petra to this day. A Petra Regional Planning Council was established in 1995 to prevent further damage to the site, and in 1997 Bait Alanbat was established as an NGO devoted to preserving Jordanian heritage, with its headquarters in Petra. The Petra Archaeological Park was first established in 1993, though did not assume management responsibilities of Petra's ruins until 2003, and only gained government support in 2007. [129]

In 1945 UNESCO was created in order to respond to the firm belief of nations forged by two world wars in less than a generation that political and economic agreements are not enough to build a lasting peace. Peace must be established on the basis of humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity. To build networks among nations that enable this kind of solidarity, UNECO has focused on mobilizing for education, building intercultural understanding, pursuing scientific cooperation, and protecting freedom of expression. UNESCO's most successful convention in the cultural heritage field has been the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural

Heritage, which was first declared in 1972 at Paris, France. Through this convention UNESCO launched the World Heritage List, which collected cultural and natural sites around the world that are of “outstanding universal value” for humanity. Their belief was that all humans share a similar interest in the material remains of the past as heritage, and that certain aspects of heritage transcend physical and political boundaries. [130] UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, by carrying out plans to finance heritage work, provide a legal and regulatory framework, supply and train personnel, and promote mutual trust and understanding between diverse stakeholders, driven by the core principles of sustainability and shared responsibility.

Petra became designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site on the 6 th December, 1985. UNESCO’s reasons for considering it to be of outstanding universal value to the world were largely focused on the tomb and temple architecture, water management features, and other tangible archaeological remains. The sheer variety of material remains that exist at Petra through its role as a crossroads of culture were viewed as being a prime example of how values can cross national and cultural borders.

However, the designation process and resulting heritage property have been criticized for a number of reasons. Some accuse the World Heritage committee of failing to design strategic site boundaries or of compiling an adequate inventory of the tangible heritage features in the valley. [131] Others have focused their criticism on how the site is being managed to this day, stating that Petra is one of many early World Heritage Sites whose management plans have not sufficiently modernized. [132] There have been poor attempts made during the twentieth century to restore the ancient structures and caves of Petra, which have ended up doing more harm than good. For these reasons, Petra was the focus of a 2010 investigation by UNESCO and ICOMOS, which put the site in the spotlight as a case of threatened heritage.

There are many threats affecting Petra that continue to this day. Natural threats include seismic activity and weathering from rain and wind, in addition to processes of desertification. Flooding remains one of the most important threats to be managed. Flash floods continue to damage the stone

tombs and ashlar masonry of the ruins in the valley, and have even resulted in the deaths of visiting tourists. [133] Salt contamination has hastened these weathering effects, as the water from flash floods dissolves the natural salt present in the rocks of the *Ras an-Naqab,* causing existing holes and hollows to enlarge. Whilst the Nabataean inhabitants of the city were well-aware of this problem, managing the flash floods through their ingenious drainage system, the current managers and residents of the area have had less success in redirecting the damaging waters.

However, humans present a greater threat to Petra's integrity than these natural processes. The site has experienced a tremendous surge in visitor numbers over the past decade, especially following the release of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* in 1989 and Petra's inclusion in the New Seven Wonders of the World campaign in 2007. The valley can comfortably accommodate between one thousand and one thousand five hundred visitors per day, according to UNESCO's Petra Management Plan. [134] However, by 2010 between three and five thousand people were visiting the site each day, and the numbers have risen steadily since then. Almost one million people now visit Petra each year. [135] Congestion points such as *al-Sīq* have been particularly affected by the greater numbers of tourists and the carved tombs and facades have deteriorated from thousands of tourists clambering around them.

Petra's tourist industry taps into the romantic and idealized aspects of the site's past, and in doing so shapes our present understanding of its history. [136] Heritage is about selectivity, power, and politics, about asserting local, national and international interests. [137] The historic, symbolic, spiritual, and aesthetic values Petra holds for different stakeholders have all been shaped by this "authorized heritage discourse" – by the system of values that are directed towards the beliefs and motivations of non-local people. [138] As a result, many World Heritage sites have become muddled between ideas of authenticity and depictions of an "accurate" past. [139] Layers of history are removed and forgotten, whilst others are highlighted for their evocative or marketable values, and placed within broader and more exiting narratives that are unrelated to the entire history of the location or people. [140] Accordingly the Roman and prehistoric features in the landscape often draw less attention than the Nabataean ruins.

Globalization has had a major impact on Petra's heritage value and use, as the site's semi-mythical history and romantic setting draws visitors from around the world. Now many non-local stakeholders lay claim to the site's value, and have driven new developments affecting Petra. Travelling to Petra is faster, cheaper, and easier than ever before thanks to improved air connections and road infrastructure, though Petra's visitor numbers are heavily influenced by the political climate of the region. More than one hundred hotels have been built in the area immediately surrounding the ruins, and are threatening to cross over the boundaries that protect the site. Tourism regulation is therefore one of the biggest challenges facing Petra in the coming decades. [141]

The livelihoods of many local communities at Petra are based entirely on tourism revenue. The B'doul, a Bedouin tribe based in Petra, has claimed to be the descendents of the city's Nabataean occupants, and have lived in the area for innumerable generations. [142] They inhabited the *Wadi Araba* and were based in the caves of Petra until 1985, when the Jordanian government forcibly resettled the tribe to the towns of Umm Sayhoun and Wadi Musa in response to the upcoming UNESCO World Heritage status. [143] Whilst their new homes provided them with proper houses and modern amenities, such as sewage and electricity, this resettlement also had the effect of disrupting social and economic networks that had been built between members of the B'doul community over generations. These problems were later realized, and in response the B'doul were amongst the tribes listed as part of the 2008 inscription on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: *Cultural space of the Bedu in Petra and Wadi Rum* . To this day, many of the B'doul people return to Petra each day to work as tour guides and "taxi" drivers for visiting tourists.

Therefore, freezing Petra according to purely conservationist values is not the solution. Preservationist discourses often do not respect the social dimensions of material culture, instead often falling back on museological language and values. [144] Petra cannot not be clinically preserved in a static form – there is simply too much demand for access to be granted to local, national, and international tourists – but the people that permanently live there should be allowed to respond to the changing conditions of a modernizing world. Moorings to the past, spatial markers of identity, and

feelings of “belonging to” or “owning” Petra are processes that are conceptualized in different ways by various groups. [145] Transformations to Petra must therefore respect – not disrupt and offend – the existing practices and values of local communities, such as the B’doul. [146] Local, national, and international stakeholders who lay claim to the ownership of Petra and its heritage values must find a balance between their interests. An approach will therefore be required in the future that facilitates consultation with the local population and allows them to guide how Petra develops according to their heritage values, their ways of life, their future aspirations.

Petra at Night

The future of Petra will be greatly influenced by 21 st century paradigms: globalization, communications technology, new electronic media, growing capitalism and tourism, and new restoration and conservation methodologies. Petra remains vulnerable to damage caused by the same natural processes that were faced by the city’s residents more than two millennia ago. Road, electricity, and water infrastructures are in need of redevelopment, especially for the permanent residents of the *Wadi Araba* who continue to rely on

pasturage and irrigation. Tourism management will require improved visitor centers, accommodation, picnic areas, restaurants, and spaces for events, though at the same time visitor numbers must be effectively monitored to ensure that they do not continue to cause excessive damage to the integrity of the valley. People invested in the site's management will therefore have to critically define what priorities should be followed to ensure Petra's sustainable use as a World Heritage site.

In addition, there are many research questions that remain to be solved regarding Petra's past. Only fifteen percent of the ruined city and caves have been archaeologically excavated, and the material remains that are still hidden may reveal completely new narratives when discovered. Artifacts and documents that have already been recovered are being re-examined according to the latest theories on Petra's past. For example, documents recovered in 1993 – one of the largest textual hoards ever found in Jordan – are only recently being investigated by the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman. Further surveys will be made with the latest geophysical technology, allowing some material remains to remain untouched for archaeologists to re-approach in the future.

Petra is one of the densest palimpsests of human history. Layer upon layer of archaeological remains provide evidence of a fascinating story that stretches back for thousands of years. It is a masterpiece of human achievement, an aesthetic and architectural marvel, and the source of a huge amount of inspiration since the 19 th century. One of the oldest settlements in the region, the site has a long biography tracing Neolithic, Graeco-Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader periods of history. Petra acquired a cosmopolitan atmosphere, as local communities were exposed to a number of different cultural influences. Petra's role as a meeting place, a crossroads, between the peoples, arts, and religions of Europe, Asia, and Africa is unparalleled, whilst the unique characteristics of the cultures that grew there were inextricably connected to the exceptional landscape. The technological genius of those who innovatively managed Petra's water supply is matched only by their artistic and architectural achievements. The significance of the landscape for a number of religious traditions must not be dismissed, as holy sites such as the Tomb of Aaron continue to attract visitors to the present day. Altogether, these truly make Petra one of the most wonderful places in the world.

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